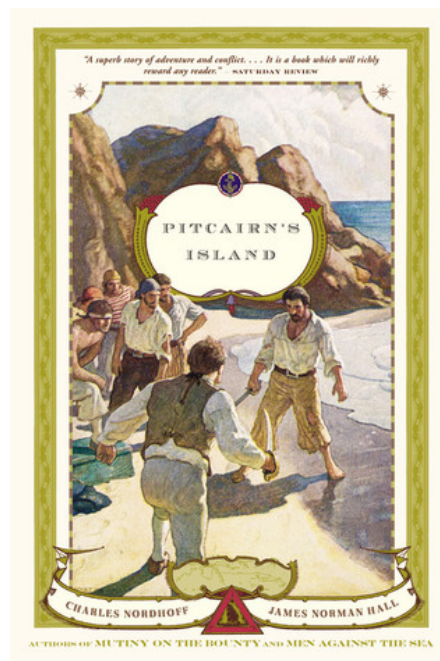




Pitcairn's Island

Charles Bernard Nordhoff , James Norman Hall

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PITCAIRN's ISLAND unfolds a tale of drunkenness, betrayal, murder, and vengeance as it chronicles the fate of Christian, the mutineers, and a handful of Tahitians, who together take refuge on the loneliest island in the Pacific.

Pitcairn's Island Details

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From Reader Review Pitcairn's Island for online ebook

Christy says

The sequel to Mutiny on the Bounty. Fletcher Christian and eight other white men, along with six Polynesian men and twelve Polynesian women, found an idyllic, remote island where they could live out their days in peace, away from the long arm of British law. But add it up. They were short three women. That only started their troubles, though. The story is brutal, and horrifying, and true. I couldn't put it down.

Paul Cornelius says

Pitcairn's Island is the most ambitious of the three books in the Bounty Trilogy. In fact, it is likely the most ambitious book Nordhoff and Hall ever undertook. In relating the story of the Bounty mutineers' escape and exile, the authors dispense with earlier perspectives and their wide epic sweeps. Whereas Mutiny on the Bounty described the voyage from England to Tahiti and the sailors' rebellion against Captain Bligh and did so from the point of view of Midshipman Roger Byam and Men Against the Sea told of Bligh and the rest of the loyal crew members' 3600 nautical miles sail in an open launch to Timor and did so from the perspective of the ship's doctor, Thomas Ledward, Pitcairn's Island mostly tells things from the third person. The latter novel also has all its action take place on a small, almost forgotten island in the far regions of the South Seas.

The result is a novel that pursues the study of its characters in a much more psychologically detailed manner. The lush island surrounded by ferocious seas also serves as a pressure cooker of sorts that eventually reveals the inhabitants of the island in all their petty jealousies, uncontrolled anger, drunkenness, and revenge. It results in a civil war, leaving a devastated community forever scarred with the memories of debauchery and murder.

Then, as the civil war comes to a close, the novel abruptly shifts to a flashback. The time moves from 1794 to 1808, and the last third of the story is told from the first person narration of the last surviving seaman, Alex Smith. The repentant Smith brings us back to the initial form of storytelling narration that existed in the first two books of the trilogy. And at book's end it provides us with a somber and elegiac close that will forever have those readers who themselves lust after clear mellow nights on the South Seas looking to the same skies that Smith did. Perhaps looking for their own redemption and escape.

Abigail Hartman says

I waffled about the rating: for some parts I would have said three, for some two, for some two and a half, for some one (!). This last novel in the famous "Mutiny on the Bounty" trilogy took me through a range of emotions, but disgust and pity were foremost. The men who sought refuge on Pitcairn's Island after their mutiny called it an Eden, but from day one it was nothing of the sort: every sort of evil, from murder to adultery to gluttony, came with them. At times it was terrible to read, especially since the anarchy of democracy precluded any justice being done, and the rampant killing in the last half is nightmarish. In the end, however, there is a pleasantly surprising amount of hope.

On a side note, while I read the three books in order - "Mutiny," "Men Against the Sea," then "Pitcairn's Island" - and spaced out by many months, I think it would be better to read this novel after "Mutiny." It would, I believe, preserve continuity and leave the characters' personalities fresh in mind.

Indian wives of the slaughtered white men killed all the Indian men. Brilliant. Suddenly the adult male population of the island was down by almost 75 percent. Then it turned out McCoy had been distilling liquor from sweet potatoes, so he had to share with the other men and they all turned into drunken louts. And the women built a stockade, defended with rifles, to keep the men out. Finally McCoy and Quintal died or were killed, and Young and Smith were sober and ready to act civilized so the society flourished. And then Young died and Smith became a Christian.

So overall, it was pretty horrifying to read, knowing it was based on a true story. It reminded me of Lord of the Flies, and Battle Royale, and Hunger Games, and that was not at all reassuring. It was nice to think of Lord of the Flies as completely theoretical, but I no longer think that. It was also interesting that once the troublemakers were all dead, society just ran smoothly. Wonder if that would apply to, say, a Mars mission. (I don't mean killing half the people, I mean just screening them out so they don't get on the ship in the first place).

The other thing I can't figure out is how or why the kids (ie Thursday October Christian, who greeted the American ship in 1808), spoke English so well. It seems like they were largely raised by their Indian mothers, I would have guessed they would have spoken Tahitian. I wonder if English was part of their lessons with Smith when he finally rejoined the women.

Oh, and I just read on Wikipedia that Thursday October was renamed to Friday October because the mutineers hadn't accounted for crossing the International Date Line. Imagine people just changing your name because your dad's calendar was off eighteen years ago!

Katie says

This book was fascinating and very depressing. What a sad end to the Bounty mutineers and their incredible attempt at making a new life for themselves on Pitcairn Island. I was blown away by their ability to start a new life on an unknown island in the south Pacific and be so isolated. I have learned two things from this book, alcohol ruins everything and be nice to your neighbors because they just may kill you.

Kevin J says

A fitting end to a wonderful trilogy of historical fiction

Beth says

I read this final book of the The Mutiny on the Bounty Trilogy first, and it has made me want to read the rest, despite it being a heartbreaking book in many ways. It is a novelized version of the real events that comprised the lives of the mutineers who fled from Tahiti to escape potential capture and punishment along with a few Tahitian men and women. They find their way to a beautiful, secure hiding spot, rich in resources. If not for human nature, it could have been a peaceful permanent haven. However, this book gives evidence that human nature is devastatingly flawed. Many of the men who settle this island are wise, level-headed, and kind, and while everyone is busy settling the island, things go along quite well, for all except the women who had the misfortune of traveling to the island as mates of the least kind and judicious of the men, and even they seem to be coping fairly well because of the companionship of the other women. However, once

there is potential for idleness amid plenty, things fall apart in a very rapid series of events, the tragedy of which evoked Shakespeare for me. A few of the men and all of the women and children survive two very awful days, and there is potential, again for peace to reign, but this time alcohol and mental illness lead to several more years of disintegration from which the women eventually flee with the children, to form their own fortified society at the other end of the tiny island. By the time an Americans in the *Topaz* happen past in 1808, shocked to be greeted by English-speaking teenagers in a canoe, just one mutineer survives in the community of women and children to provide a history of what has transpired. The society the Americans discover is a peaceful, organized, beautiful, and literate one, but it has been hard-won.

James says

Simply amazing tale of humanity... the dark side of humanity that is! This is the best book I've read in years, a vital read about the perils of democracy and vulnerability civilization. It's a story even more timely and important now than it was 200 years ago.

A.M. Faisal says

A dimmer edition to the Bounty series. Liked the first one mostly.

Michael says

Not a big fan of fiction... but have read 3 books of the mutiny on the Bounty. This novel based on actual events is actually very good. It really grabbed me and kept me reading. The characters are very well developed to where you actual start to develop feelings towards them. I hate this guy, I like this guy, I hope this guy lives..... No one really knows exactly how things happened on Pitcairn Island, but this book is so well written that it is almost convincing. I have since learned that this is the third book in a trilogy... maybe I will have to read the previous 2... this one was good enough to make me consider it.

Nicholas Whyte says

<https://nwhyte.livejournal.com/2927397.html>

Pitcairn's Island, unlike the other two volumes, has no narrator, apart from the last three chapters which are told by Alexander Smith aka John Adams. Of the fifteen men (nine English and six Tahitians) who landed at Pitcairn in 1789, he was the only survivor when the island was eventually discovered by the American ship *Topaz* in 1808; Smith/Adams himself gave several different accounts of what had happened during the remaining two decades of his life, and one of the women who moved there in 1789 eventually returned to Tahiti and gave her own account. It's a messy story of violence, alcoholism, and sexual confusion, in an earthly paradise - Pitcairn has the natural resources to support a couple of hundred inhabitants, but even so the small settlement disintegrated fatally.

Nordhoff and Hall dramatise some parts - Fletcher Christian here lives for a few agonising days after the inevitable killing starts, whereas most historical accounts agree that he was one of the first to die - and

undersell others - I would very much like someone to write the story from the Tahitian women's perspective, given that they outnumbered the men by three to one after the first spate of killings, and by twelve to one from 1800 when the second last mutineer died. It's also striking that the society was a very young one - Fletcher Christian was 24 when the mutiny took place, and 28 when he was killed; the other mutineers (and presumably the Tahitian men and women they brought with them to Pitcairn) must have been mostly the same age or even younger. Nordhoff and Hall fall back on the clichés of the veteran tars, the unsophisticated "Indians" or "Maori", and their statesmanlike leader, rather than the possible truth of the confused young men and women in an extraordinary situation. But the moment of discovery of the island by the Topaz is particularly well done, and is almost worth the read in itself.

Jeff says

I found this postscript to the Bounty mutiny much more interesting than the mutiny itself...

Walter says

In the third novel of the "Bounty" trilogy, the mutineers of the "Bounty" take their Tahiti brides and four male islanders and settle on the previously uninhabited island in the Western South Pacific, the place known as Pitcairn's Island. This novel is fascinating in how it contrasts with the second novel of the series, "Men versus the Sea". In "MS", Captain Bligh and the castaways of the Bounty take a scant amount of food, no weapons, very few supplies and a small launch which was designed to transport small parties from ship to shore, and use these to travel over 1,000 miles through the Pacific to safety in the Dutch port of Timor. Bligh and his crew had nothing, but managed to make it all of those miles to safety with only two men lost.

In contrast, the mutineers had vast resources, an entire island to themselves along with more supplies from Tahiti and the supplies of the "Bounty" itself, and in the end they end up being murdered by each other. It's a sad tale of how men who have nothing in common except their conspiracy in mutiny, with no God and no moral code and no social binding to hold them together, turned a place which should have been a new Garden of Eden into a new manifestation of hell. The mutineers conspire to turn their native helpers into slaves. When the natives revolt and kill half of the mutineers, the remaining mutineers build a still and become perpetual drunks who are supported by their women as they stagger 24/7. Eventually the wives revolt against the men and kill the few who were left. By the time an American vessel visits Pitcairn's island 16 years after the Bounty originally landed there, only one survivor of the Bounty was left on the island. The only other traces of the Bounty mutineers were the children that they begot and the women who supported them and eventually helped to finish their annihilation. It's a fascinating story.

While the other two volumes of the "Bounty" saga are seafaring tales, "PI" is really more of a story of Paradise lost. It makes one wonder about the makeup of man, are we really basically good creatures, or is there an evil inherent in man that would spoil any utopia that we seek to build for ourselves. I'm sure that Nordhoff meant the reader to ponder this as we read about the demise of the Bounty mutineers. I would recommend this novel to anyone who enjoys such tales.

Buck Plankchest says

sounds like a lovely little island

Jennifer Niland says

The third book in the series and a wonderful capstone. This is a fascinating account of the lives of the mutineers and their Tahitian wives and companions on the isolated island home, Pitcairns Island.

Pam says

Epic, it's hard to imagine that this really happened, but it did! One does not need to read the first two books of the trilogy to read this, in fact I had no desire to do so. This could be made into a intriguing film by Spielberg or some great film maker.

It was not a book I would have naturally picked up on my own accord, but an avid reader suggested it and I took note and gave it a whorl!
